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Descrizione dei Chiese di Genova

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Descrizione dei Chiese di Genova



Sixth Year Terminal Project submitted to the Faculty
of Clemson University College of Architecture as partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Architecture.

Gordon W. Patterson
December 1974

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A special acknowledgement to MS. ANNA CASSOL for the many hours she spent with me in the Palazzo Rosso interpreting and explaining the handwritten histories of the churches and acting as an interpreter in conversations with PADRE P. FELICE RIMASSA of the Church of the Madonna. I must also thank MR. FRAZER PAJAK for acting as a personal guide and interpreter for the city of Genoa, and MRS. CORRINE LASKEY for the typing and editing of this material.

Preface

Genoa, Italy, provides the opportunity to study a city with almost 2000 years of change. This is the area where Christianity, the chief source of education and culture, gradually spread from Rome throughout Europe, and the erection of a church often resulted in the foundation of a city. This is particularly true of Italy where the Papacy rose to great power and influence, and rivaled or controlled such civil government that existed.

This study is intended as an introductory report of the development of churches in the Genoa area. It hopes to provide additional insight into the churches' development and to integrate the various aspects into a systematic framework. This report covers sixteen churches, fifteen of which originated in or before the twelfth century, and one which originated in 1696, and is covered in greater detail.

Introduction

"Our greater skills and superior knowledge sometimes separate us from the past. We know or have more access to knowledge than our ancestors. 'Precisely,' T.S. Eliot has noted, 'and they are that which we know.' "

It seems appropriate as an introduction to this study to review history as it relates to man and his religion.

In the beginning, man lived as part of nature. Animals were sacred, powerful, and superior beings to be approached with caution and depicted in secret. The external world was perceived through the experience of the self.

Since his beginning, man has attempted to separate from nature and to make his own world by identifying and naming places. Nature was and is invested with spiritual meaning. At this point, the Neolithic Age, sacred places were established whose qualities expressed the variety of religious experience.

Verticality, to man, gave a measurable direction to the world and to the unknowns of the universe. This led to the establishment of systems and the beginning of order in formless nature. The movements of the sun, moon, and stars were studied for many centuries, and patterns were discovered which would allow for predictions of nature.

The first high civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia were established on the river flood plains. For this reason, the sacred places, the ordered representative world of nature, were raised on mounds or platforms; therefore, the concept of elevation was born.

Man's effort in understanding the world and nature was frequently re-enacted in long, elaborate, and extensive ceremonies. These led to the creation of ceremonial centers related both to geometry, man's most valuable tool for understanding space, and those forces dealt with through ritual and social action. The Ziggurat, a sacred mountain representing the model of the world, was orientated in relation to the cardinal points.

In Egypt, the pyramids and their related courts and chapels were related axially to the cardinal points. The temple plans were tightly organized into a sequence of spaces that were based on the right angle.

From the annual need to re-survey the flooded Delta, there developed a system of measurement and related proportions, and the idea of the modular grid was born.

These primary spatial concepts were thoroughly understood and explored by 1450 B.C. They were integrated with equally complex systems of myth and religion. This combination of geometry and methodology is the basis of all subsequent religions and city building, and still carries the overtones of its origin.

The architecture of Greece reflects each stage of Greek history with remarkable accuracy. It was at first a walled refuge around a ceremonial center, but after the Dorian invasions (1000 B.C.), a new urban form developed. The ceremonial center was dispersed through the whole town, and the temple took its special place in an ordered hierarchy of urban functions: agora (market), council room, gymnasium, stadium, theater.

Within the sacred precinct, order is created by a complex geometry incorporating the theological and geographical meanings of the site. The temple is aligned or related to the forms of the sacred landscape; the layout reflects the form and order of the ceremony it contained.

The architecture of the Romans was influenced by the masonry of the Etruscans. Social and political development was displayed in the variety and monumental nature of their buildings. Their building industry, operating on a scale unsurpassed for 1800 years, provided a standard of technological expertise which was only recovered by the nineteenth century.

A change was now gradually initiated by the introduction of Christianity, a new force in the world's history. The Christian faith was first spread throughout the Roman Empire by means of the military highways, and the Christian religion was carried from Judea, its birthplace, to Rome and then out from this center to the extremities of the civilized world. The establishment of Christianity as a state religion resulted in the construction in Rome of over thirty churches of the basilican type. These churches, while retaining pagan architectural features, were gradually modified to meet the requirements of the new religion.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire, a new political structure gradually emerged. Walled cities huddled defensively around church or castle and reflected the social structure of feudalism. Medieval

cities were closely packed within the walls. Communications were by word of mouth; consequently, differentiation according to class, family, loyalty, and trade were extremely important. Heraldry and pageantry were not only an entertainment for the rich but an essential part of life in the guild-dominated city. The monasteries and convents conserved the form of Roman cities.

The Crusades and the fall of Constantinople accelerated the flow of new knowledge of classical philosophy and Islamic mathematics to Europe. Fifteenth century Italy was thus able to re-discover the Roman inheritance now so far distant as to constitute an ideal past.

The Early Renaissance concentrated on individual buildings and their immediate surroundings. The primary planning elements — palace and church, monumental stairway, piazza, arcade, focal sculpture, or fountain — were explored and established as the basic kit of parts of the city.

While the Early Renaissance was powered by mercantile prosperity, the sixteenth century saw control pass to soldiers and princes. The Papacy reasserted the forms of imperial authority. By 1600, Sixtus V had inaugurated a radical restructuring of Rome, linking the main centers of pilgrimages by avenues and processional ways, marking sites of future piazzas with obelisks brought from Egypt by the ancient Roman emperors.

The Renaissance at length entered upon a baroque phase. The character of the architecture of the new churches and palaces faithfully reflects these changes in favor of Classic traditions by use, in both forms, of the Roman Orders of Architecture, hemispherical domes and other Classic features, instead of pointed arches, intersecting vaults, and vertical features of the Gothic period.

With the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution was set on its course. The Italian palace declined into a block of flats and entirely new types of buildings were required for social, civic, industrial, and commercial activities. New materials and new inventions were matched by an explosive population increase and an enormous growth of urbanization.

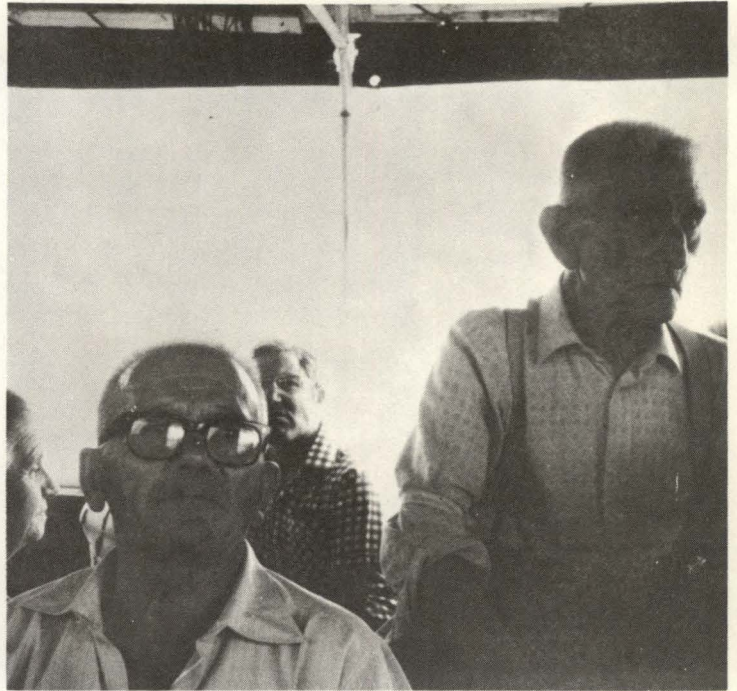
This brings us to the modern world, which is in the second generation of this technological development.

Genoa

Genoa made its first appearance on the stage of history as an ally of Rome in the first Punic War, 218 B.C. It was probably founded as a mixed community of natives (called "Genuati" by the Romans) and of Greek, Massilian, and perhaps Etruscan traders who found the natural harbor a safe and profitable base for their activities.

Genoa, in its remoteness from the main Roman empire, has survived and grown over the centuries as a center of trade and commerce for the Ligurian

area. The original inlet was much smaller than the great modern port would lead one to think, with its nine miles of breakwater, its 40 miles of docks, and its berths for 200 ships. It was around this small bay that the city of Genoa developed — on the nearby rocky promontories, on the strand below, and then gradually (in the course of centuries) upward onto the hills behind and along the coast, westward toward Voltri and east to Nervi. It is today a city of wide extension occupying some 15



miles of coastline but of no great depth. The hills immediately behind the town reach a height of about 800 feet and form a natural amphitheater up the slopes of which buildings rise in tiers like a giant stairway. Elevators and funiculars perform the duties of bus and tram. The spires and towers of a hundred churches point to the sky. In the port, the ships and cranes, the warehouses and silos, form a pattern at the water's edge.

The people of Genoa have struggled against a harsh environment to make a living and, therefore, have turned to the sea to seek their fortunes. The sea has made them good seafarers and highly successful traders. This unrelenting struggle with the sea, and the characteristics derived from other trading communities, has left an imprint on their characters. This commercial experience of mixing with every variety and condition of man has also induced religious tolerance among the Genoese and



the great mass of the people were, and still are, deeply religious. They have an avid veneration of relics from the past which would appear to verge upon the superstitious, but this was a common occurrence in the Middle Ages. The Genoese of today remain predominantly religious in outlook, although this attitude is balanced by a dislike of zealotry.



Churches of Genoa

The churches of Genoa display three aspects of character of the Genoese people which have been prominent during the course of their history — their religious devotion, their artistic ingenuity, and their wealth.

— Edmund Howard
Genoa — History and Art
in an Old Seaport

Genoese churches cover most of the whole range of ecclesiastical architecture that is found in Italy, and have particularly elegant examples of early Romanesque and Baroque. The number of churches listed in the Dizionario delle Strade di Genoa is 177, and this figure does not include convents or chantries, nor at least nine churches which have been destroyed. Most information available attributes the beginnings of the Christian religion in Genoa to the martyrs Nazarius and Celsus, who were beheaded in Milan in 67 A.D. during the persecution of the Christians by the emperor, Nero. Two of the churches covered in this report are of the first period of Christianity in Genoa, the Church of Maria delle Grazie (first called SS. Nazario e Celso), and the Church of S. Maria di Castello, both of which were founded in the first century after Christ.

Since Genoa has a wealth of churches, this part of this report is limited to churches that were founded on or before the twelfth century. They are found on page 11. They are contained, in the most part, within the walls of the city of 1155 A.D.

PLAN OF THE CITY OF GENOA – XII CENTURY



SAN MARIA DELLE GRAZIE

San Marie delle Grazie is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, churches in Genoa. It was first founded in the first period of Christianity, and was built on the beach at the place where the martyrs Nazarius and Celsus landed and first introduced Christianity to Genoa. The name of the first church on this site was SS. Nazario e Celso, in honor of these martyrs. It was rebuilt in the thirteenth century and again in the sixteenth century. The present church is of this later date.

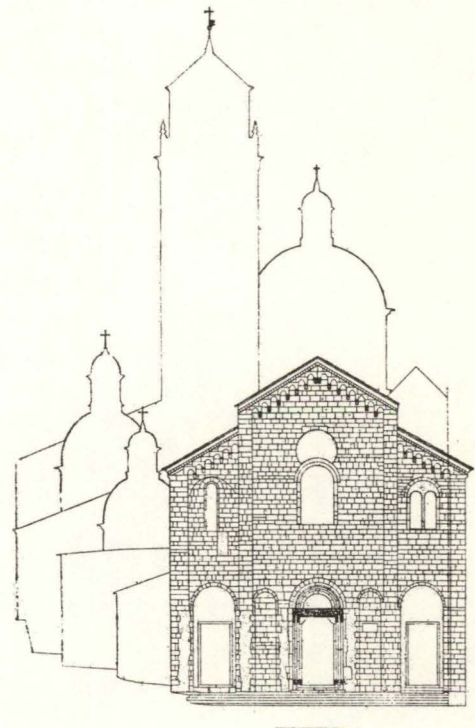
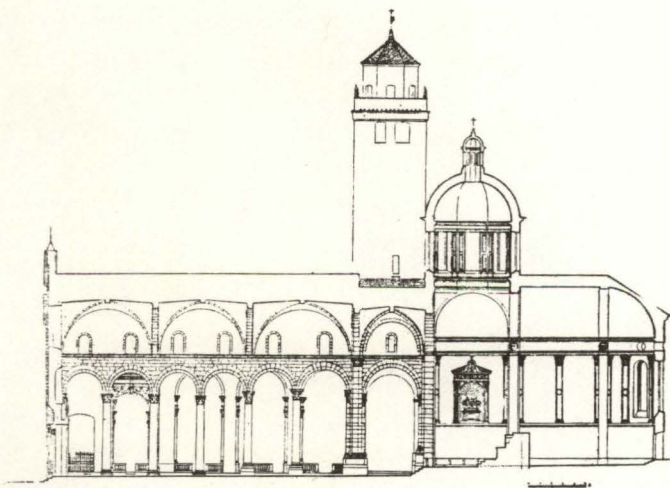
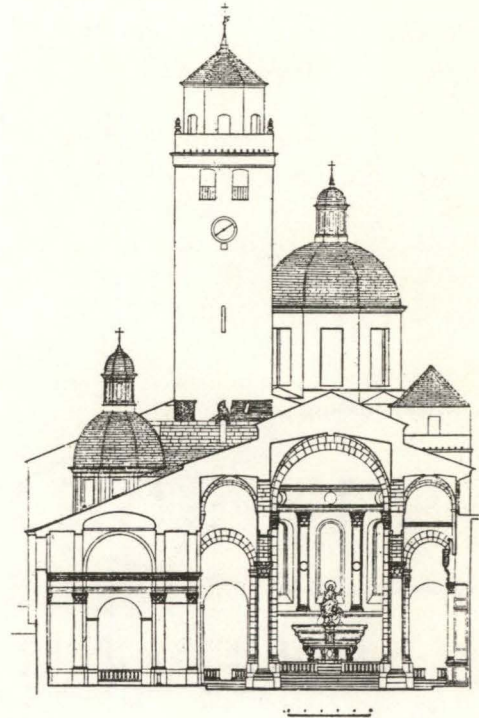
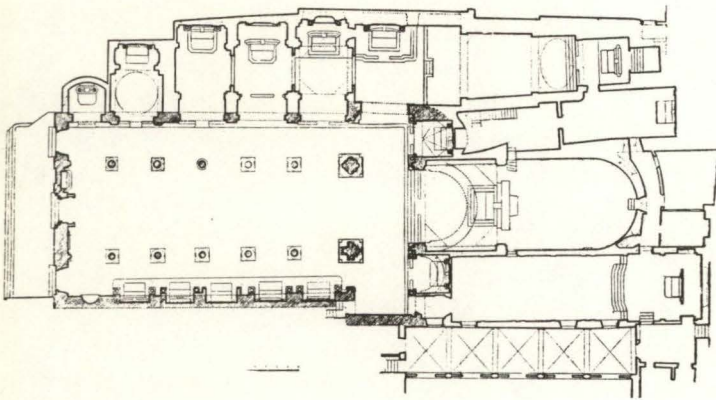


SAN MARIA DI CASTELLO

San Maria di Castello, along with the preceding church (San Maria delle Grazie), is one of the oldest churches in Genoa. It was founded in the first century after Christ but was destroyed by the Lombards in 646 A.D. It was rebuilt in 658 A.D.

As is the case with many of the Genoese churches, the church as we see it today rises on the site of the earlier churches and has been restored often. Beneath the sacristy, which is of the first half of

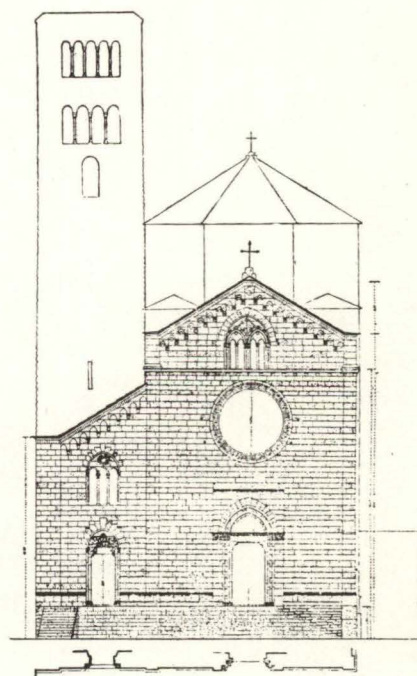
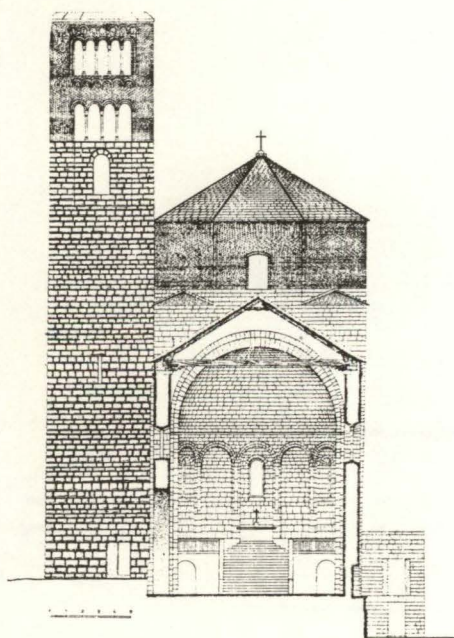
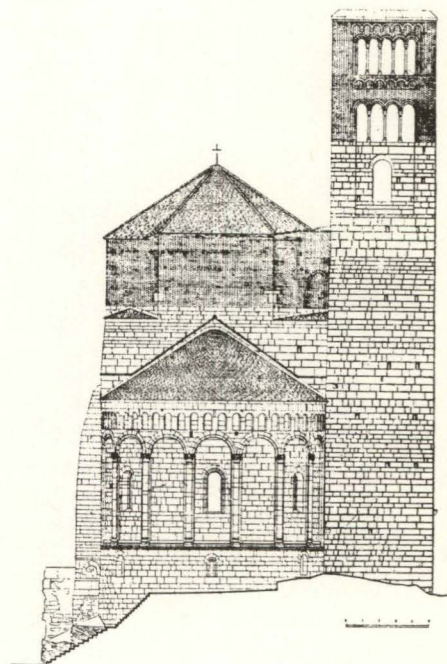
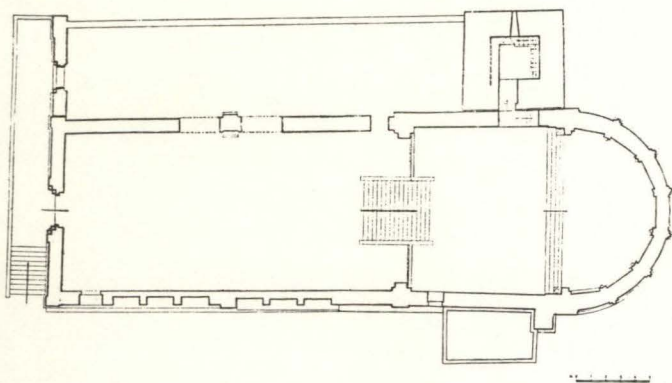
the twelfth century, there was the church of 658 A.D. There is a carved, marble panel in the church with a pattern of leaves and crosses — typical of eighth and ninth century design — and it may have formed part of the choir enclosure of the original church. Much of the decoration of the present church has taken place after 1440, and the ribbed roof is formed of Gothic vaulting of this period.



SAN STEFANO

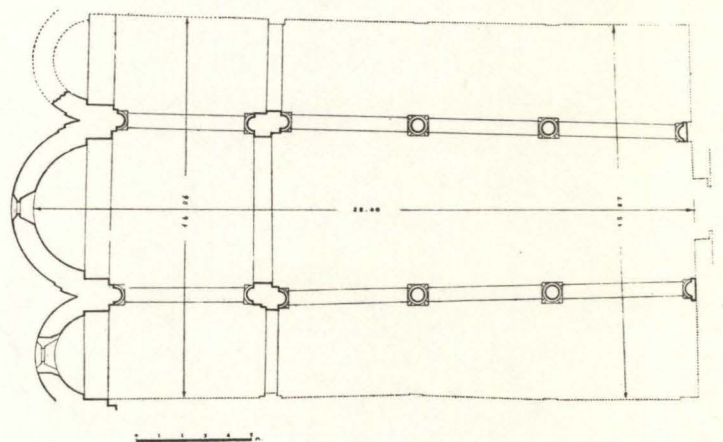
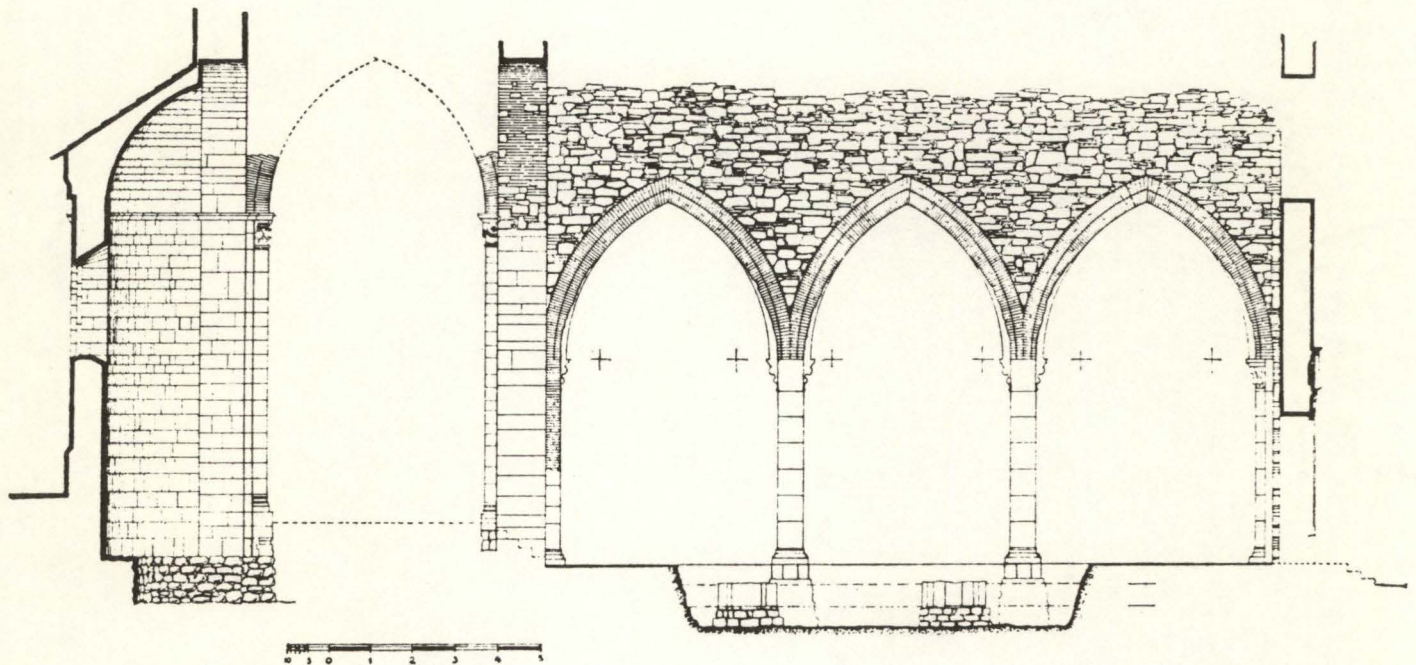
San Stefano is one of the oldest of the surviving churches in Genoa that has not been rebuilt in a later style. It is very probable that it occupies the site and incorporates some of the structure of San Michele, the old tradition of which ascribes to the very beginnings of Christianity in Genoa. The church as San Stefano existed in 493 A.D. and was partially destroyed in 935 A.D. It was rebuilt in its present form in 972 A.D.

San Stefano is a striking church because of its harmonious simplicity. The style is Romanesque, and it is built almost entirely of gray stone. The facade, for perhaps the first time in Genoa, uses contrasting bands of white and black stone. The interior is as simple and unadorned as the outside. It has a short nave, without aisles, which terminates in a flight of steps leading to the sanctuary, which is on a high level. This is probably one of the most elegant of the Genoa churches because of its excellent proportions and simplicity.



SAN SABINA

The church of San Sabina first came into existence in 579 A.D. It was destroyed in 935 A.D. but had been rebuilt in 1008 A.D. The drawings show this church in its partially restored form of 1547 A.D. It has not been restored to its medieval form.

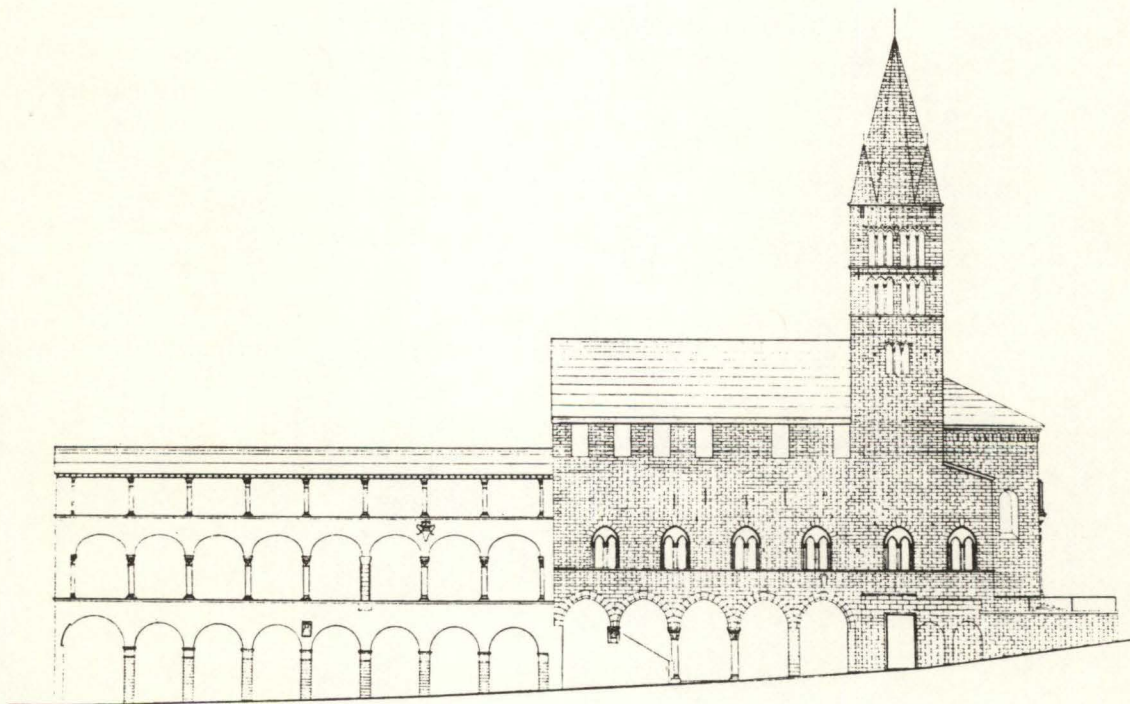
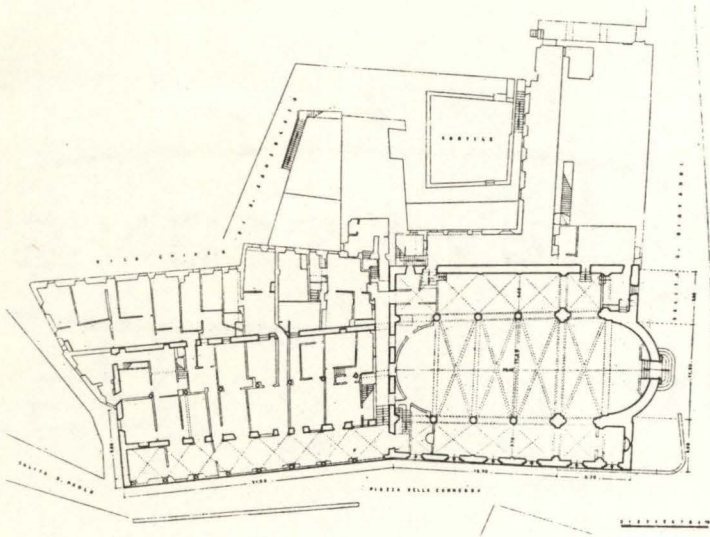


SAN GIOVANNI DI PRE

San Giovanni di Pre (Paverano) was founded in 636 A.D. as Santo Sepolero. When St. John the Baptist's ashes were first brought to Genoa, they were first repositied in this church. In 1180, Guglielmo Ottaggio built over Santo Sepolero the Church of San Giovanni. In 1162, the Knights Hospitallers of St. John took over the church and later rebuilt it as the Commendam of St. John. This included the church, convents, dwellings, and other buildings, and operated as a charity hospital until 1797. Much of

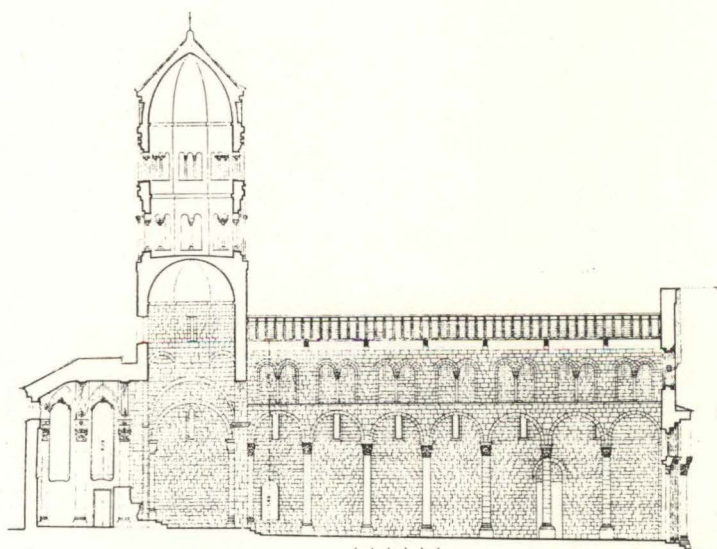
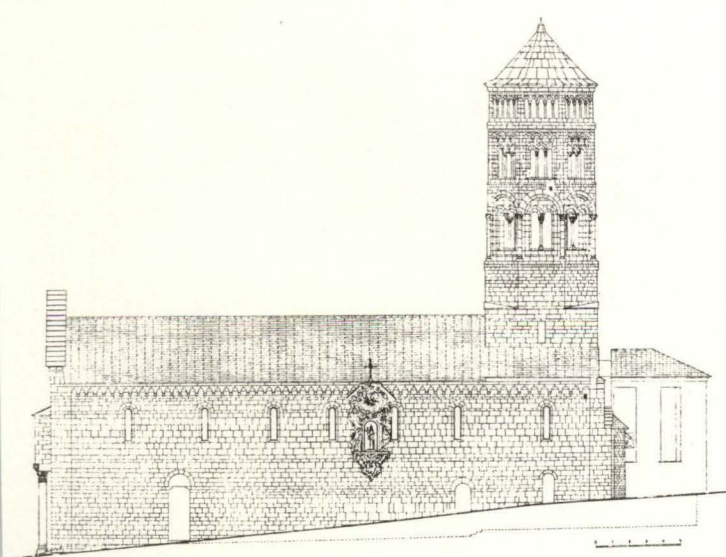
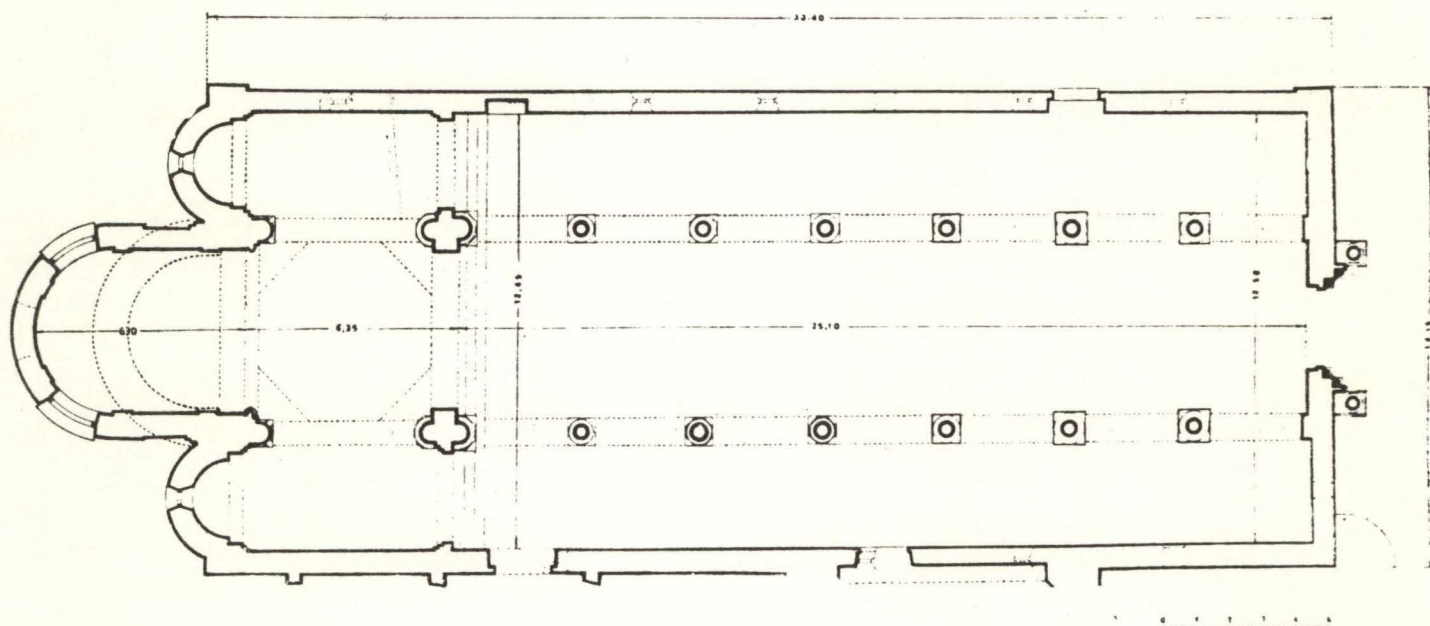
the complex of buildings, gardens, and pools, were destroyed when the main traffic road along the port was built in the middle of the last century. The church portion was restored in 1873.

The church is a mixture of Romanesque and Gothic, the outside arches being pointed while the supporting arches are Roman.



SAN DONATO

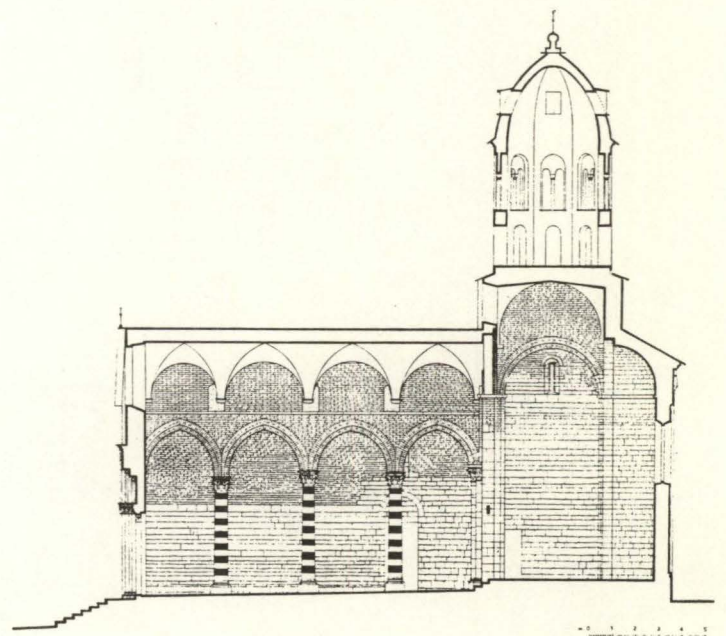
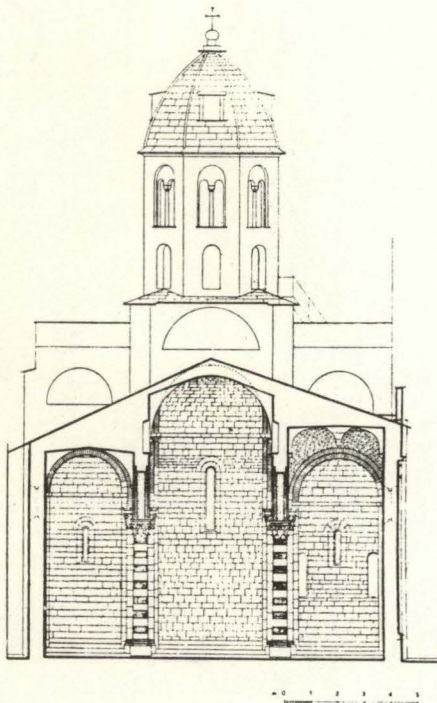
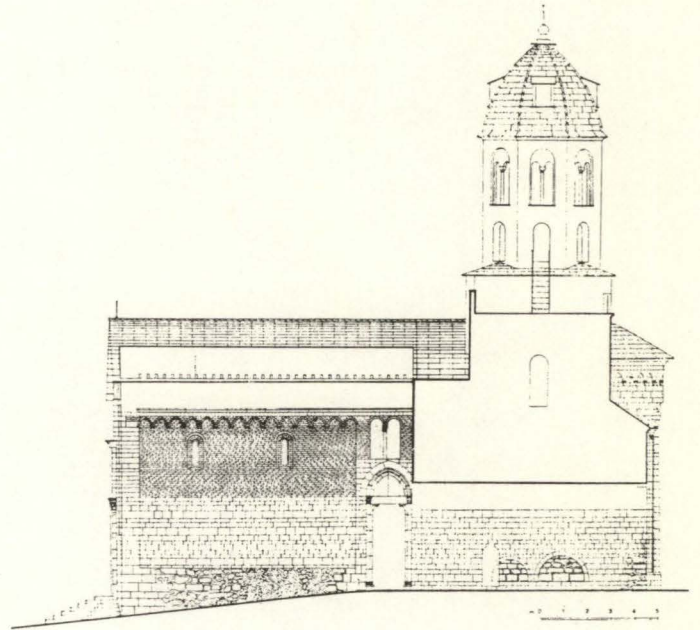
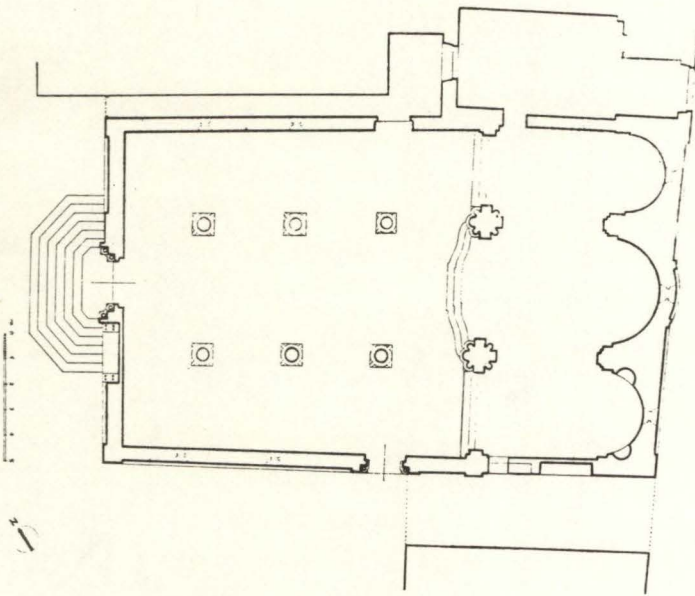
San Donato is a very old parish church, founded during the Lombardy period. It was enlarged and lengthened in 1170. The building in its present form represents a transition from Romanesque to Gothic and was restored during 1884–1892. The octagonal tower is one of the finest in Genoa, and was restored before WWII. The beamed ceiling is a modern restoration after damage suffered in that war. The floor is of squared marble patterns.



SAN COSMA E DAMIANO

San Cosma e Damiano was founded in the Lombardy period as a parish church. Its original style and shape have been retained although it was burned in the twelfth century and was bombarded by the French in 1684 when the cloister was demolished. It had become a monastery in 1661, previous to this bombardment. Its most interesting features are its main doorway, which has slender columns on each side, and the inset in the pavement of the nave, which has an inscription which states that members of the Corpora-

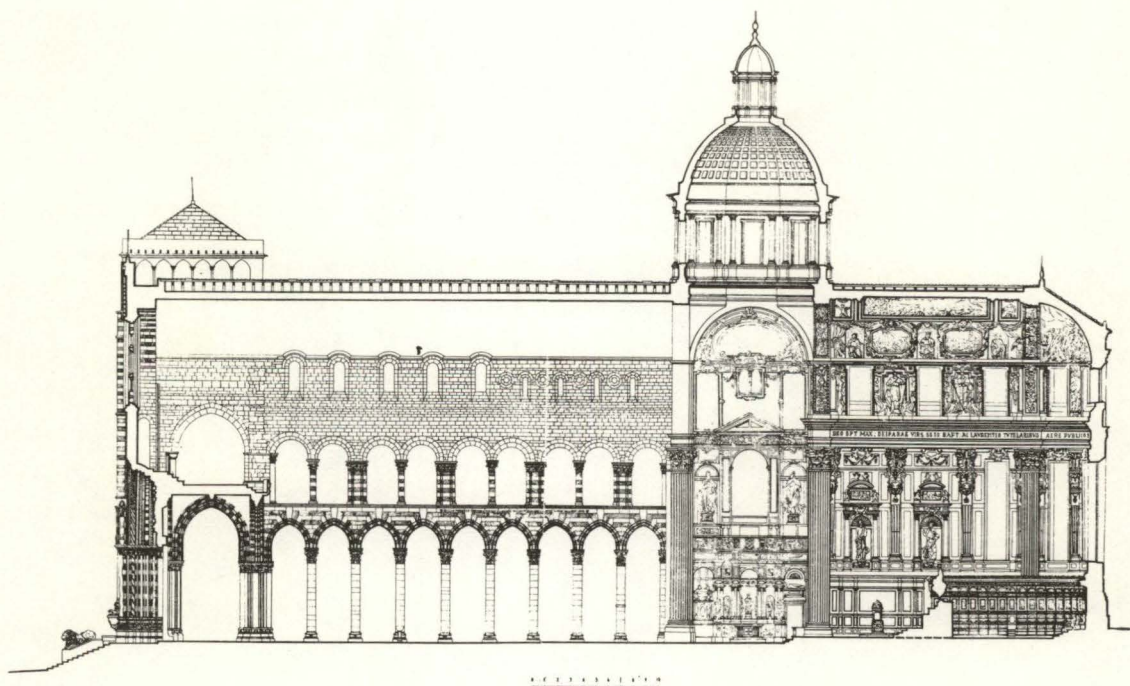
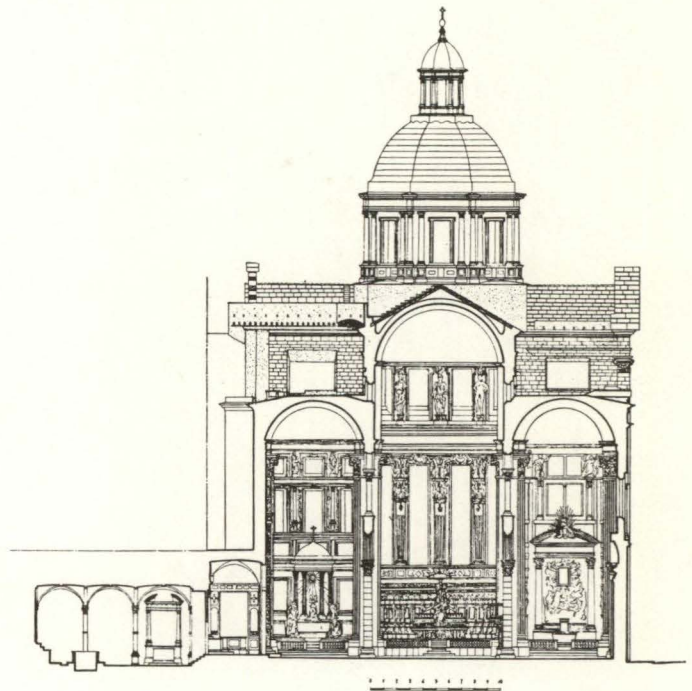
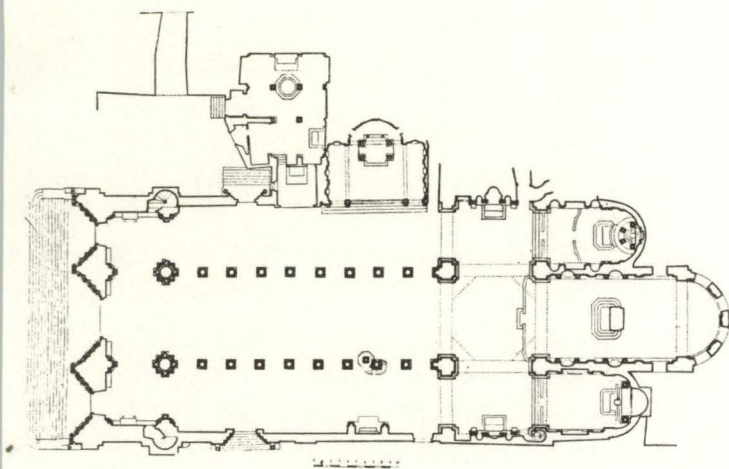
tion of Barbers and Leeches have the right to burial in this church. Saints Cosma and Damian were doctors, martyred in 287 A.D., and since barbers performed the duties of surgeons in the late Middle Ages, these saints were called their patrons. The church was restored to its original form in 1900.



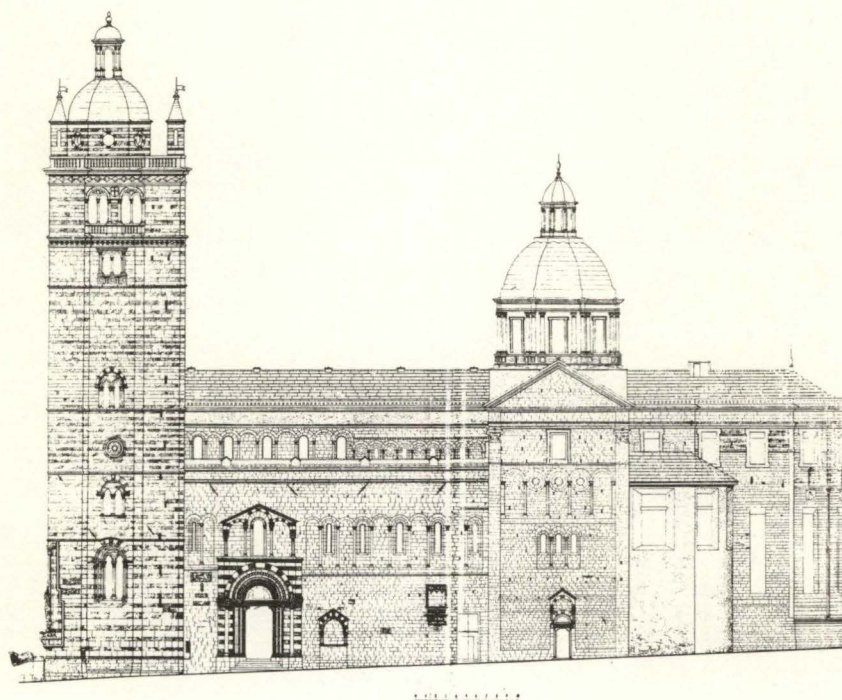
SAN LORENZO E CHIOSTRO

San Lorenzo is the cathedral for the city of Genoa. It is, therefore, its most important church. The Bishop of Genoa, Sabatino, had the relics of Saint Romulus transferred from the city of San Remo in 878 because they could not be held securely against the Saracen invasions. They were moved to the Church of San Lorenzo which was located inside the walls of Genoa and allowed some measure of security. In 980 A.D., the cathedral of the city was transferred from San Siro to San

Lorenzo. It was a small church at this time. The church as we know it today was begun in 1099, after the Genoese Crusaders accidentally stumbled upon the ashes of St. John the Baptist and brought them to Genoa, in 1098. It was a Romanesque church with a wide nave and two aisles. It was damaged by earthquake in 1222 and began again with a new Gothic front. It was burned by the Ghibellini (state police) in 1296 A.D. during a civil strife. It was rebuilt and enlarged during the fourteenth century



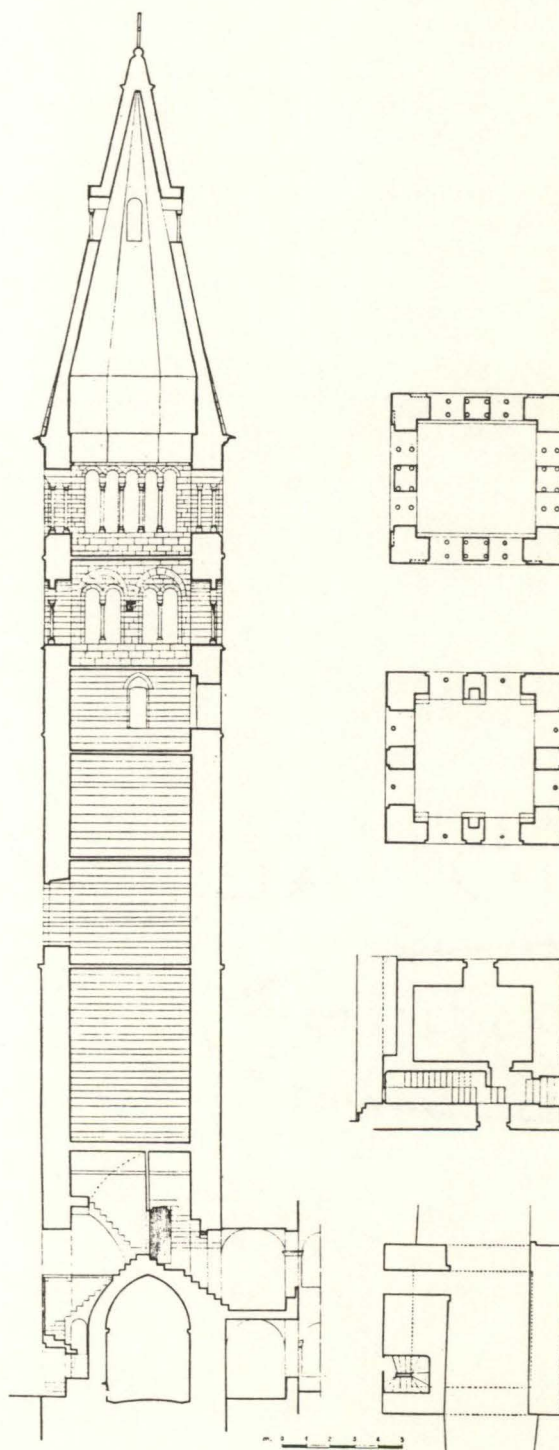
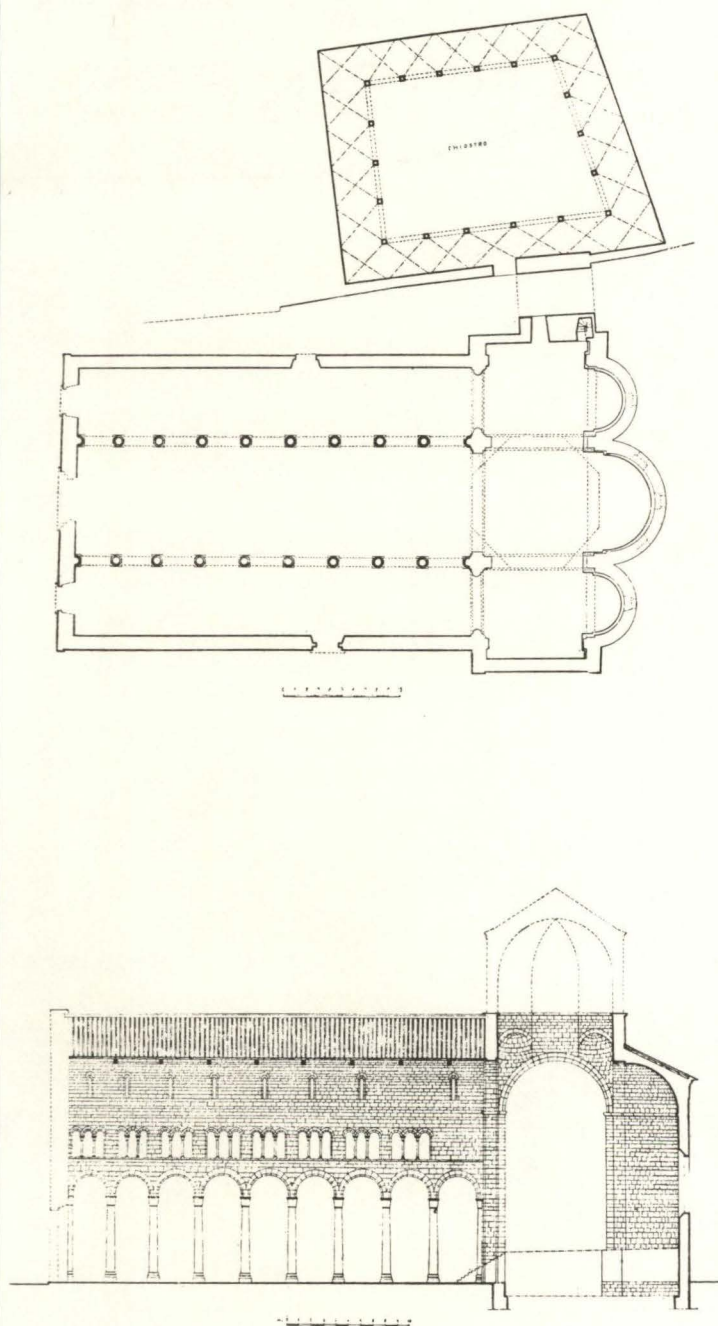
The interior of the church reflects some of the finest art and sculpture of the Genoese artists, such as the Gaggini family and Giovanni D'Aria. In the nineteenth century, the church was restored to its form of 1100 A.D.



SAN MARIA DELLE VIGNE

The church of San Maria Delle Vigne was founded where vineyards existed, outside the walls of the old town. It was built in 980 A.D. on the site where a smaller church existed. The church we see today has very little remaining of this first church. It was rebuilt between 1586-1588, and again in 1673-1681. The church was enriched greatly by many families, such as the Vivaldis, Di Negros, Imperiales, Grimaldis, and others.

The present facade of the church was added in 1841 by Ippolito Cremona, and is neo-classical in style. Probably the most important architectural feature of the church is the belfry which dates from thirteenth century or earlier. It is one of the oldest of the bell towers in Genoa and was used as a model for many of the later towers. Under the arch of the tower is the tomb of the Vivaldi family, the foremost family in this quarter of town in the Middle Ages.

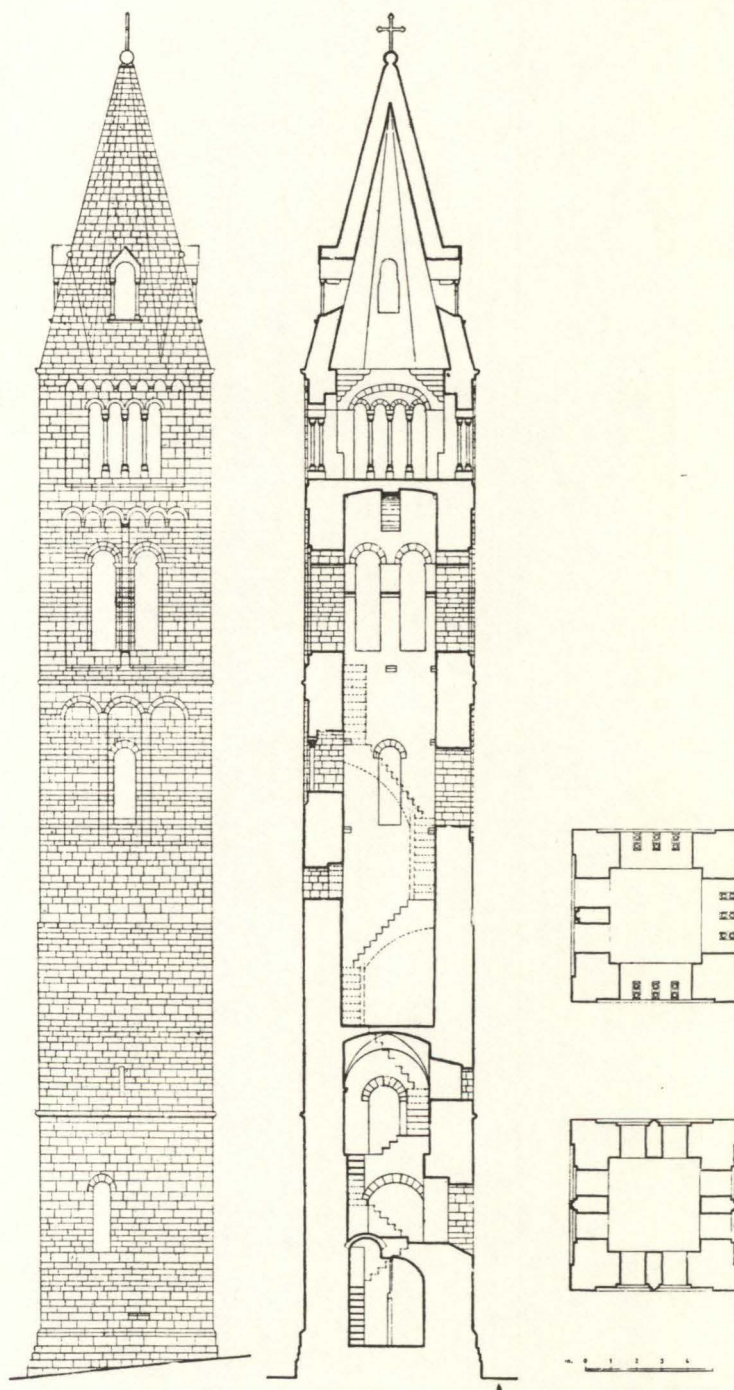


SAN SIRO

San Siro, first called the SS. Apostoli and later San Siro, has the distinction of being the first cathedral church in Genoa. There is no trace of this original church of the sixth century. As it exists today, it dates from 1006–1023. It was partially destroyed by fire during the 15th century with only the campanile remaining. The campanile was torn down in 1904 because of its poor condition and danger of collapsing. The church was rebuilt in 1583 and 1613 by the Order of Theatines. It is of classical design and has

baroque decoration by the architects, Andrea Vannone and Taddeo Carlone. The cupolas in the end chapels are examples of this decoration.

San Siro, as has been previously noted, was the cathedral of the city of Genoa until 980 A.D. when the cathedral was transferred to San Lorenzo.



SAN SISTO

The Church of San Sisto was founded in 1087 in commemoration of the Genovese and Pisani victory over the Turks in Africa. It existed until 1400 as a Benedictine church and after this date became a parish church. It has had many reconstructions — one in 1600, another in 1721, and the last in 1828.

San Sisto is located in the port area on the Via Pre, which is considered the "black market" area of Genoa. It is octagonal in plan, with a simple street entrance.

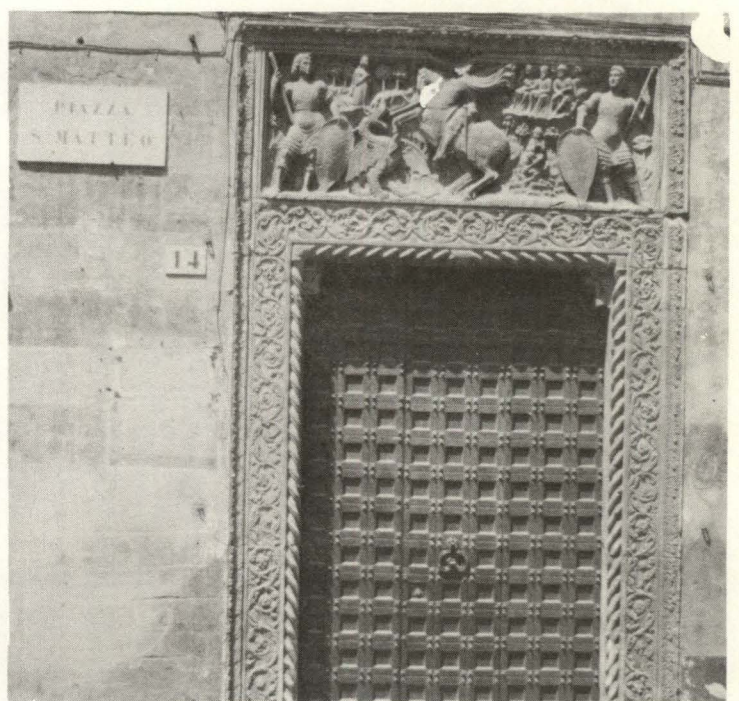
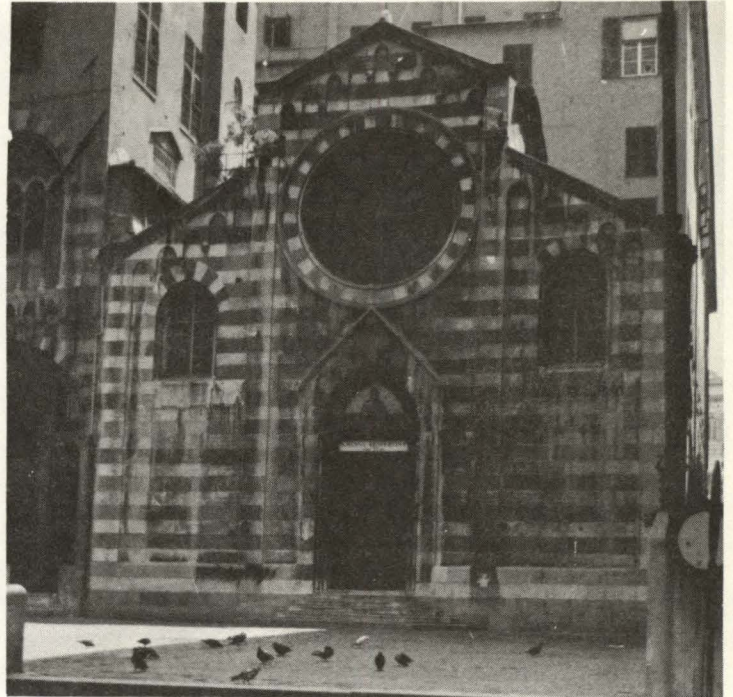
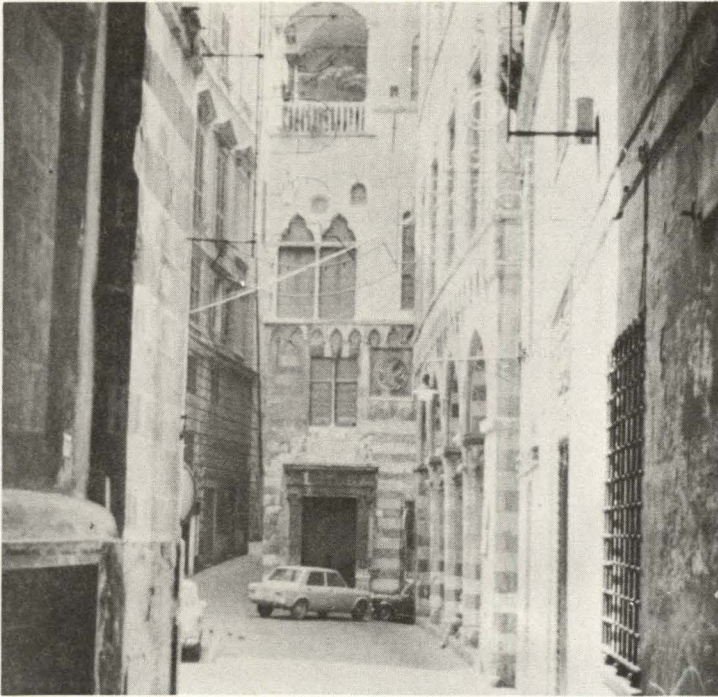


SAN MATTEO

Genoa's greatest family, the Dorias, lived in and owned San Matteo, which is located in the Piazza San Matteo. All of the buildings surrounding this piazza were constructed in the thirteenth century and it is known as one of the most attractive squares in all of Italy. It was founded in 1125 by Matteo Doria. The present church was partially rebuilt in 1278 when it was moved back on the piazza and had black and white alternating horizontal bands of stone added to the facade.

Following a custom used in other churches, there are inscriptions in some of the white bands, recording the main feats of the Doria family.

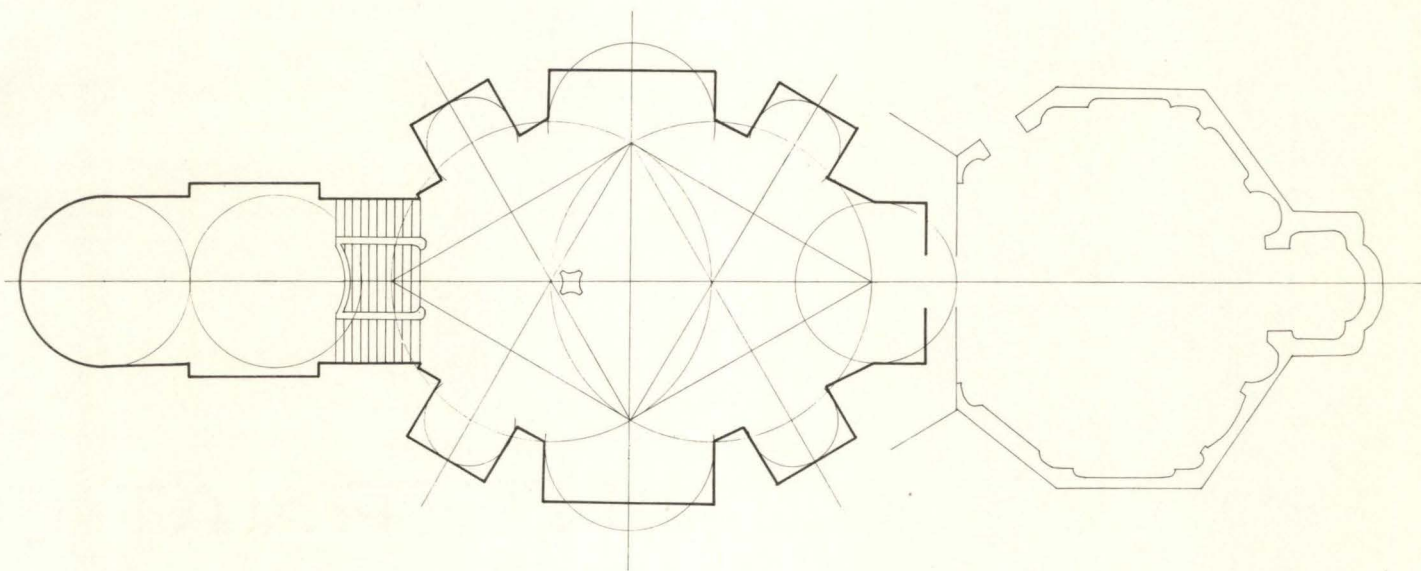
The church is Gothic on the outside but changes to the Renaissance style on the inside. The interior is the result of Andrea Doria, a principal citizen of Genoa who had the interior redecorated by a Tuscan sculptor and architect, G. Montorsoli, in the sixteenth century.



Santuario della Madonnetta

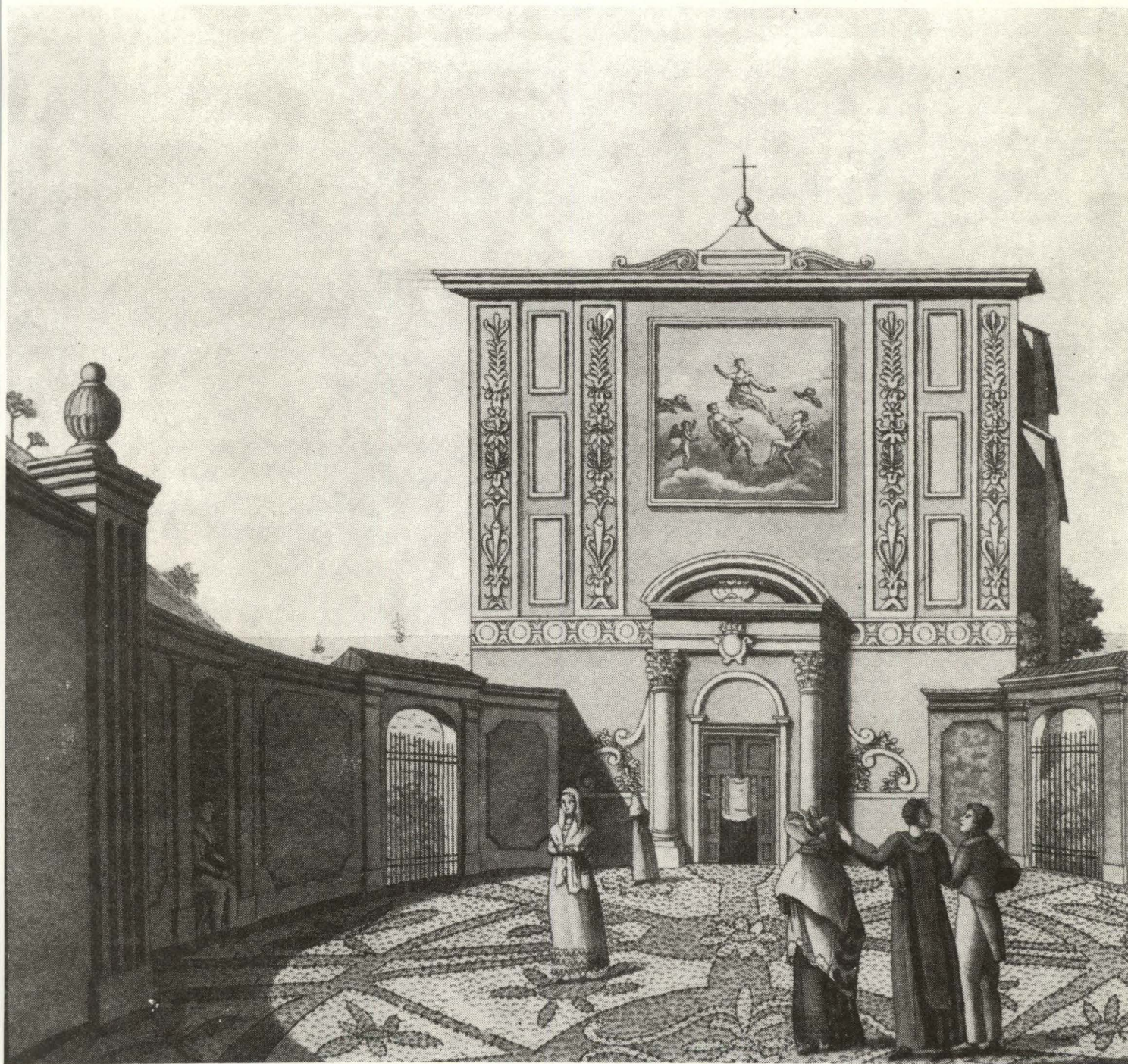
Santuario della Madonnetta is located on the Salita (ascending walkway) Madonnetta. The church was built above the Church of San Nicola in 1675–1696, by Carlo Giacino Sanguineti, and is defined by the walkways of red brick which lead to it. Padre Carlo Giacinto Sanguineti was a very religious man, a student of culture and theology, and had influence in the aristocratic and ecclesiastic societies of Genoa. He used this influence to help the poor in many ways. This church is the work and dedication of this man. During this period of history (the end

of the seventeenth century), the Genoa Republic had to defend itself against France, who attacked from the sea, and from the Piedmontese, who attacked from the mountains. The medieval walls were insufficient for the defense of the city, so new walls were constructed on the hills surrounding the city. New forts were constructed first, and then the walls connecting these forts were built. These walls, along with earlier walls, now show the historical development of the city and divide it into its different areas.



SANTUARIO DELLA MADONNETTA

The entry courtyard showing the marble aggregate patterns and the painted facade complete with shadows. The painted figures have long since faded, but the scribed plaster surfaces still contain their original pattern. From "Descrizione dei Santuari del Piemonte" by Giov. Guiseppe

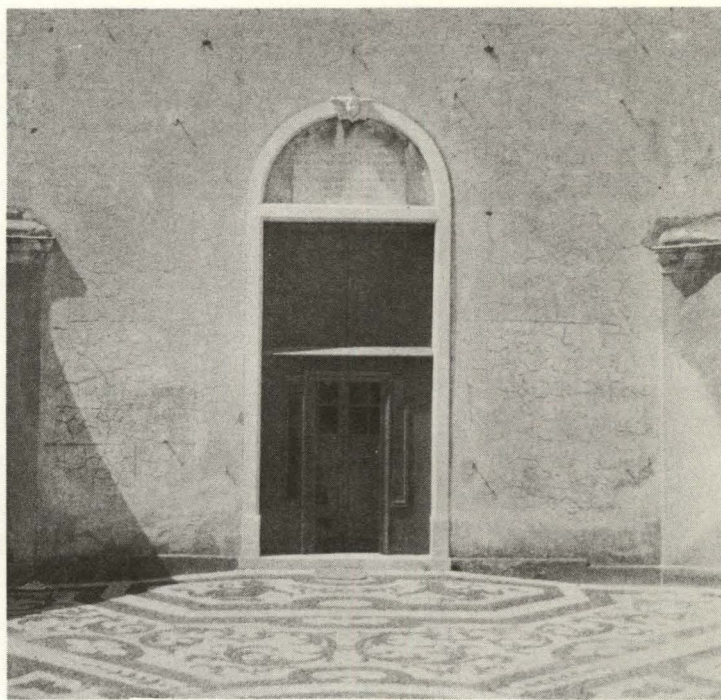
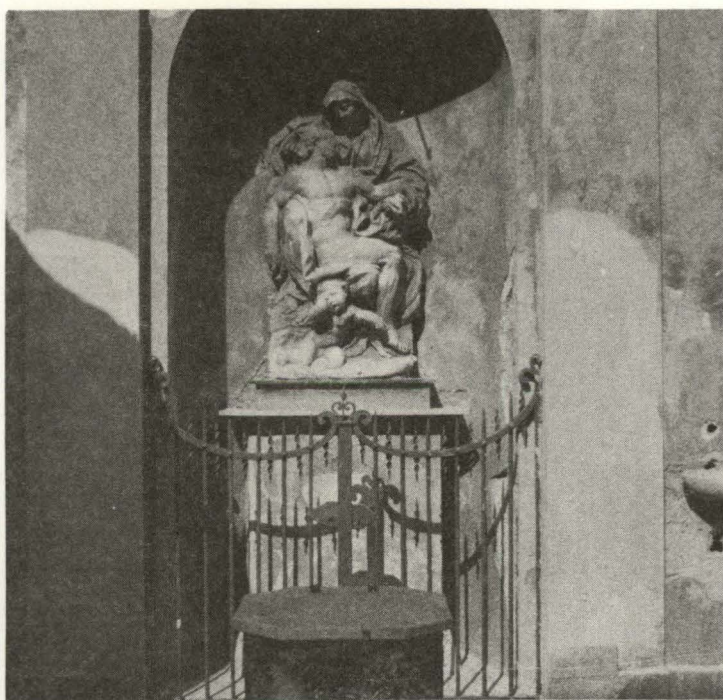


During this period, there was also a revival of emphasis on architecture, both secular and religious. Many churches dedicated to the Madonna were built in the city. The baroque and rococo styles of architecture were prevalent in Europe, but in Genoa a style was developed which was much more somber and elegant. This church is the prototype of this new style.

The place where this church is built had an existing little chapel which contained a sculpture of the Madonna with

Christ, in alabaster, which many people called "La Madonnetta." This sculpture was probably by the Gaggini School, in Sicilia, in the sixteenth century. From this sculpture and the vision of the Friar (Carlo Giacino Sanguineti), the name of Santuario della Madonnetta was derived.

The vision of the Friar, which occurred while he was at the Church of San Nicola, was in the form of a dream and is as follows:

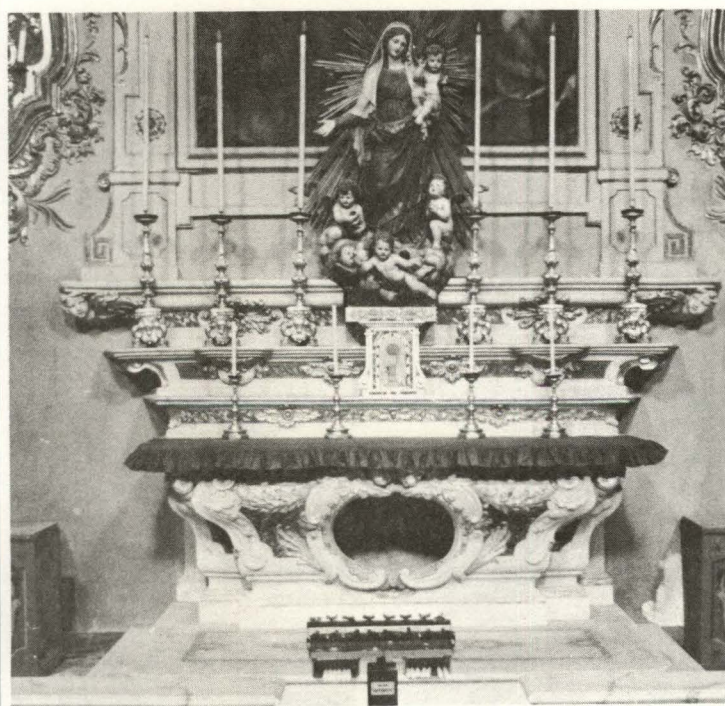
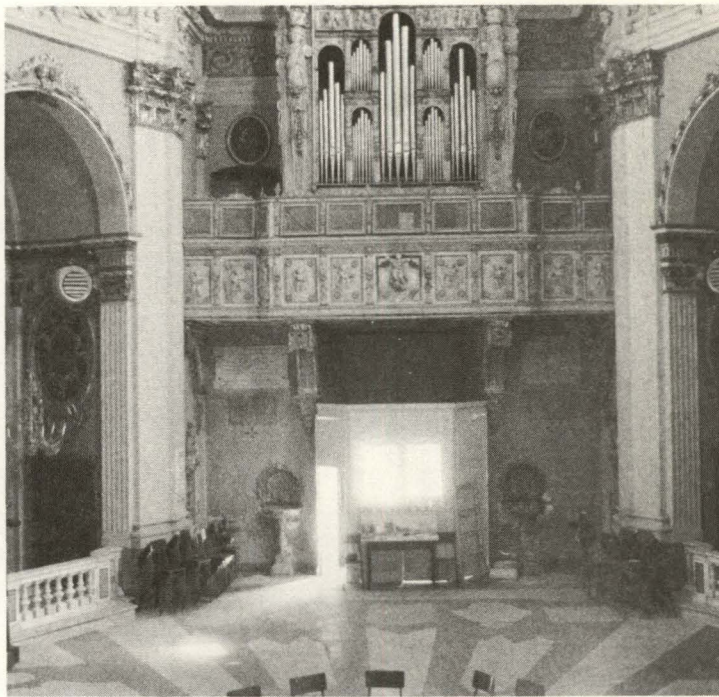
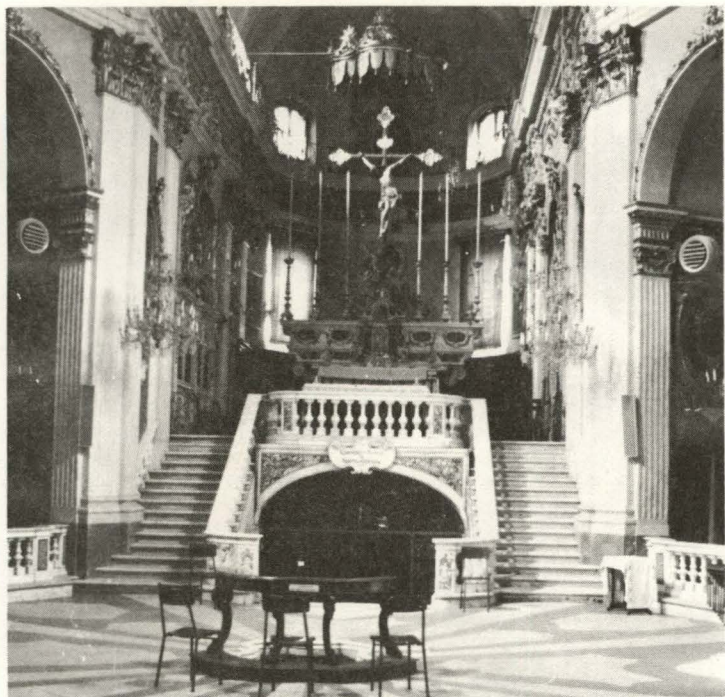


"The vision was of a large church consecrated to the Madonna with many altars and many holy images . . . with the image of Madonna in the center with people surrounding it. Under this central space, a place with the representation of Christ dead in the arms of the Madonna."

This is the philosophy that the architect, Anton Maria Ricca, followed when designing the church. From this philosophy Anton Maria Ricca developed a very personal

and original concept of "church."

Its beginning was May 4, 1695 with completion occurring on August 15, 1696. The Friar had a monastery built beside the sanctuary, and at the same time he founded the nuns' Order of St. Augustine for the upkeep of the church. The City of Genoa recognized the importance of the church at its completion, and offered the insignia of the city. The Friar recognized this bond between the city and church by placing a wooden sculpture

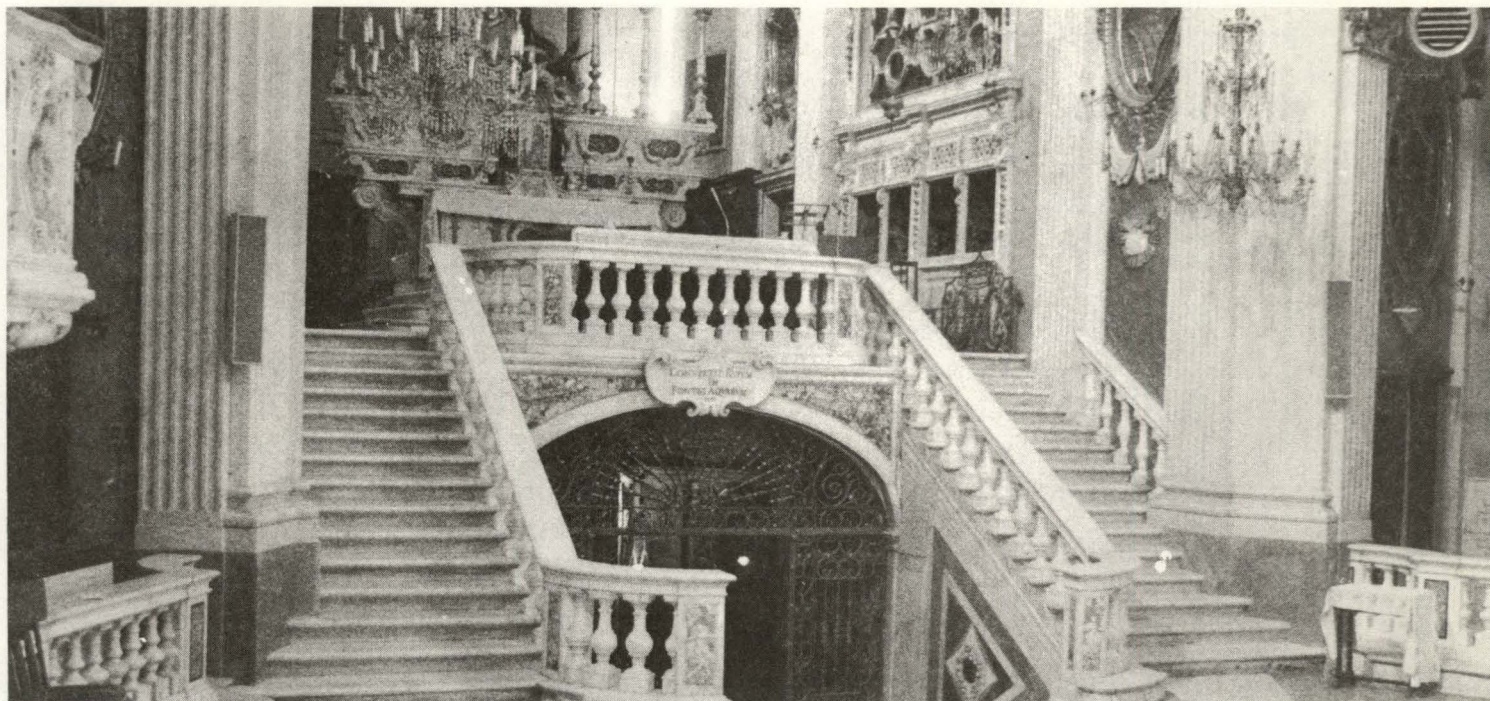


(from the city) by Domenico Bissoni of Maria SS. ma Regina di Genova (Queen of Genoa) in a niche of the apse.

The church is a series of octagonal forms, starting with the entry courtyard and ending in the high altar and Chapel of the Madonna below. It contains two Pietas, one in the courtyard and one in the chapel below the altar. The courtyard Pietà is used to express immediately the intent of the church (celebration of the Ma-

donna) and the Pietà in the chapel reminds the people of the church and Christ during worship. These Pietas are also used as a definition of sequence, with each being at opposite ends of the religious ceremony.

The church was designed with a sequence of spaces which become more private and personal as one proceeds through its interior. This sequence is as follows: the entry courtyard is for all people and is a very open space. The large central area is for Mass and is surround-



ed by the six chapels for the saints. Below the high altar space is the chapel area which is for semi-private worship and is a smaller space. Proceeding back toward the center of the church on this level, you reach the Chapel of the Madonna (with the other Pieta), which is a very small place for private worship.

This church has become very important and draws people from many miles in the surrounding area. Every year, since its consecration in 1707, a religious procession is

conducted to celebrate the Day of Madonna Assunita.



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